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CIRCULAR LETTER 40/2012

12 April 2012

**ENSURING CONSISTENCY BETWEEN ENCS
AND CORRESPONDING PAPER CHARTS**

Dear Hydrographer,

1 The maritime community, and especially the International Maritime Organization (IMO), stakeholder organizations and the associated media continue to carefully monitor and assess the progress of implementation of ECDIS and ENCs. The IHO has reported progress to the IMO on an annual basis for a number of years. The next input from the IHO related to ECDIS will be in May and July this year. While this input will focus primarily on technical ECDIS implementation issues, the interest by IMO delegates and others in the provision of adequate and consistent global ENC coverage has not diminished. For this reason, ENC coverage and consistency has remained on the agenda of all the relevant IHO bodies and the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) and is a topic raised regularly by ECDIS stakeholders.

2 Differences between paper charts and ENCs. A specific presentation and discussion on ENC consistency took place at the 4th Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference in 2009. Much of that presentation was prompted by information provided by the UKHO, based on its unique position of publishing a global portfolio of paper charts and its access to its very comprehensive hydrographic archive. A number of stark examples were given where the consistency between published ENCs and the corresponding paper charts gave particular cause for concern.

3 The UKHO has continued to develop its process of comparing the UKHO and other national hydrographic offices' paper charts with the corresponding ENCs so as to ensure consistency and be able to provide the mariner with confidence that there are no significant differences between paper charts and ENCs. The UKHO categorises any differences that it finds on the basis of impact to the safety of navigation. It then enlists the support of the relevant ENC producer in order to resolve any differences. Many such differences are then resolved speedily through the updating of either the paper charts or the ENCs, as appropriate.

4 Long-standing unresolved differences between paper charts and ENCs. The UK Hydrographer has most recently informed the Directing Committee that the UKHO is currently seeking to resolve over 900 differences that have potentially significant implications for navigational safety. These differences cover 400 ENC cells from 30 different producer nations. While UKHO is confident that the ongoing cooperation of its fellow hydrographic offices will quickly resolve many of these issues, there is an urgent need to resolve the longer standing navigationally significant differences. Of particular concern is the fact that some of the differences between paper charts and the corresponding ENC that have been identified have remained unresolved for so long that the ENCs may be unsuitable for continued distribution.

5 Clearly, in the interests of safety of navigation and the collective reputation of the IHO and its Member States, it is unacceptable if there are any paper charts and ENC's in circulation that are in conflict. The Directing Committee therefore encourages all Hydrographers to ensure that if there are instances where differences between paper charts and the corresponding ENC have been identified, then they are resolved as quickly as is possible. Member States are also encouraged to actively participate in the relevant IHO and other bodies, particularly the RHCs and the WENDWG in order to ensure the closest possible cooperation and resolution of any issues that arise.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Ward', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert WARD
Director